(b) if so, whether the North Eastern Council has received comments on its study report from all the North Eastern States; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF DEVELOPMENT OF NORTH EASTERN REGION (SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) NEC has received comments from only two States, *i.e.* Nagaland and Mizoram.

(c) The two State Governments have stated that air connectivity particularly intra-region connectivity needs to be further improved and the air fares rationalized in North-East. They have also suggested review of present arrangements between NEC and Alliance Air and installation of ILS at all the airports in North East.

Passport offices in district

†2598. SHRI UDAY PRATAP SINGH: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are considering to open a passport office in every district in order to facilitate and simplify the procedure of obtaining a passport; and

(b) if so, the details thereof, State-wise?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) and (b) No. There is no such proposal at this juncture. Currently, there are 464 District Passport Cells (DPCs) in India, which accept passport applications. The Government have been impressing upon the concerned State Government to open DPCs in the remaining districts of the country as early as possible.

Posting of Tamil knowing High Commissioners

2599. DR. K. MALAISAMY: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(a) whether it would be prudent and beneficial to post Tamil knowing High Commissioners in Sri Lanka, Malaysia and Singapore where the majority of Indians are Tamilians;

(b) in this connection would it not be better to take a policy decision to prefer and post a person as a High Commissioner provided he/she is familiar with the Indian languanges to which majority of Indian people belong; and

(c) if it has not been done so far would it be done soon within a time-frame?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) to (c) Heads of Mission are appointed keeping in view a wide range of criteria and qualifications which are not limited to the knowledge of languages. Our Missions abroad have always maintained a close rapport with all sections of the Indian Diaspora.

Seat in UNSC

2600. SHRI VIJAY J. DARDA : Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that since 1991-92, India has not been able to get a seat in the United Nations Security Council probably due to our inability to round up necessary number of votes to support our candidature; and

(b) if so, now with better standing in our economic scenario, and our voice being heard by the international communities with better relevance and reverence, whether intensive diplomatic efforts would be initiated to get a non-permanent seat be channeled judiciously by taking advice/ help/assistance of friendly Nations, without, of course, compromising our long-cherished ideals of non-alignment and universal peace and tranquility?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) and (b) India has contested for a non-permanent seat of the United Nations Security Council for seven two-year terms, namely, 1950-51, 1967-68, 1972-73, 1977-78, 1984-85, 1991-92 and 1997-98, and was elected for each of these terms except the last, India has presented its candidature for a non-permanent seat of the Security Council for the term 2011-12. The Government are taking necessary steps to mobilise